

Business Portal

Integrate Government Services for Businesses

2006 Year End Report

1. Overview

“The Next Washington” outlines Governor Gregoire’s **Open for Business** approach to keeping Washington businesses competitive in the world by reducing barriers and improving efficiency. One component of this approach is the Integrated Online Business Services Initiative which provides a clear and easy way to navigate the online systems for state and local licensing, tax, and regulatory filings. Typically known as the Business Portal, the initiative has already improved access to government services and regulatory functions using single online tools. This approach helps ensure that businesses and environmental permit applicants can “get it right the first time” when they deal with government. In the longer term the Business Portal will provide even more personalized and integrated services to save time and money for Washington businesses.

In 2006 the project successfully launched four releases on schedule. Today the website is:

- **Easier to find** with a new web address (URL), business.wa.gov
- **Easier to navigate** with:
 - Information reorganized into categories business people intuitively understand
 - Simplified and clarified language
 - Improved and established clear links to and from the websites of partner agencies
- **And more comprehensive** with:
 - Links to more online information and services provided by state and local agencies
 - New step-by-step instructions for starting a business
 - New interview capability to help business owners answer the question *Do I need to register with the state?*
 - An improved online process to change an address with four state agency programs
 - Ability to apply online for the state’s master business license and simultaneously apply for city business licenses in 12 cities
 - New information on business licenses and taxes in all 278 cities in Washington

The project team reached out to business leaders, organizations supporting businesses, and other state and local government agencies to increase use of the portal and gather stakeholder input during the development process. These outreach efforts are ongoing and the homepage of business.wa.gov now offers a short survey for users on the services provided by the portal.

Utilization of the site is up by 9% and satisfaction rating of the business community has increased by 16% from a score of 55 to 64.

Business Portal
Integrate Government Services for Businesses
2006 Year End Report

2. Accomplishments by Release

The following table lists the capabilities and features that were implemented as a part of each release.

Release	Capabilities & Features	Benefits to businesses		
		Clarify and simplify regulatory requirements	Reduce time, cost and effort	Increase access to government services
Release 1 February 28, 2006	Established the Doing Business section of Access Washington as the state's Business Portal. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated the business portal home page (Doing Business section of Access Washington) and link pages. Enhanced "Plan a New Business" and "Start a Business" service paths. Agencies provided updates to existing links and made necessary updates. Added an on-line survey. Implemented the capability to monitor and track click traffic. 	X	X	X
	Guided checklist to help new businesses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guided checklist developed for "Start a Business" 	X		
	Updated agency websites. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed to the standards and guidelines for the link back to the Business Portal including link text, placement and click tracking. Agencies added links to Business Portal on their web sites. 	X	X	
Release 2.1 May 25, 2006	Established brand and improved look & feel including a change in the domain name, URL, navigation, buttons and some customized look & feel. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted "Doing Business in Washington" as the tag line. Developed and added a masthead. Improved look & feel. Simplified and clarified text. Secured the Business.wa.gov URL (web 	X		X

Business Portal
Integrate Government Services for Businesses
2006 Year End Report

Release	Capabilities & Features	Benefits to businesses		
		Clarify and simplify regulatory requirements	Reduce time, cost and effort	Increase access to government services
	address)			
	<p>Defined and established primary categories of information based on findings from business user testing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start a Business; Licenses, Permits and Inspections; Hire and Manage Employees; Taxes and Reports; Grow a Business; Change Business Status; Do Business with the State; Resources. <p>Improved the usability within the categories to ensure users can find the information or services they are seeking.</p>	X	X	X
	<p>Established an interview capability that can be expanded in future releases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview focus on “Do you need to register your business with the state?” 	X		
	<p>Agencies continued making improvements in their web properties. A few examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Licensing (DOL) – Washington Licensing Information (WALI) website facelift was renamed to Business Licensing Guide (BLG) DOL – Updated the Big List of Licenses Labor and Industries (L&I) – Created a permit & inspection index with links to ECY Department of Revenue (REV) – Updated close a business page <p>Made it easier for users to navigate within the agency websites, to the business portal and to other agency websites.</p>	X		X
Release 2.2 October 12, 2006	<p>City regulatory information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Published and linked to a printable document with city licensing information. Published the document on the Association of Washington Cities (AWC) Web site. Added links to this document on the Business Portal and DOL’s Web site. 	X		

Business Portal
Integrate Government Services for Businesses
2006 Year End Report

Release	Capabilities & Features	Benefits to businesses		
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Release 2.2, Release 2.3 November 30, 2006	Grants & Loans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created a business focused grants & loans page, subdivided into categories. 			X
	Glossary of Terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified the top terms used on the portal. Created a contextual display of the definition for the user. Established a process to implement additional terms as needs arise. 	X		
	Search Enhancements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved the search results for the top 20 search terms. Redesigned search results page so that "George picks" are more noticeable. 		X	X
	Change Business Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-wrote language and process on DOL's change structure page. 	X		
	Starting a Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplified, clarified, and improved the layout of the Licenses and Permits within the 'Steps for Starting a Business.' 	X		
	City Regulatory Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created index of cities with links to detailed requirements. Created individual pages for each city describing regulatory requirements. Connected to the Master Business Application for cities which are included in the Master Licensing Service. Established a contractual relationship with the AWC to provide and maintain city information. AWC provides the information using a Web Service that the Business Portal uses to display to users. Created custom error messages when the 	X		X

Business Portal
Integrate Government Services for Businesses
2006 Year End Report

Release	Capabilities & Features	Benefits to businesses		
		Clarify and simplify regulatory requirements	Reduce time, cost and effort	Increase access to government services
	service or some information is not available. • AWC maintains data and provides it to the state using a web service.			
	Change of Address • Re-wrote guidance on DOR's current change of address page to be more precise. • Created a multi-step guide to help businesses through the complicated process. Provided links to additional sites to help them determine where they need to change their address.	X		
	Hiring an Employee • Created a step-by-step process to help a business choose which, out of several activities, they are required to do.	X		
	Bid Opportunities • Updated links to bid opportunities from each of the 22 participating agencies.			X
	Link Improvements • Twenty-two agencies reviewed and updated all links to and from their agency websites to make sure they all worked and connected to current information.			X

Business Portal
Integrate Government Services for Businesses
2006 Year End Report

3. Outreach to Stakeholders

Outreach with stakeholder groups was an area of focus for the project this past year. Stockholder groups included business community, organizations that support businesses (e.g. associations, chambers of commerce, etc.) as well as state and local jurisdictions. The following table lists the outreach activities that were conducted this past year.

Date	Outreach Activity	Audiences		
		Businesses	Organizations that Support Businesses	State, County & City
February 13, 2006	User walkthrough of site	X	X	
March 9, 2006	Meeting with additional agencies			X
March 24, 2006	Olympia Business Roundtable	X	X	
April 26, 2006	Association of Cities & Counties Information Systems Spring Conference			X
April 28, 2006	Spokane Business Roundtable	X	X	
May 11, 2006	Unified Business Identifier Conference for agency customer service staff			X
May 3 - May 6, 2006	Usability testing	X	X	
May 19, 2006	Vancouver Business Roundtable	X	X	
May 23 - May 24, 2006	Information Processing Management Association Conference	X	X	X
June 6, 2006	Association of Washington Business		X	
June 13, 2006	Department of Social and Health Services Information Technology Group			X
June 20, 2006	Digital Government Summit			X
June 21, 2006	Financial Management Advisory Council			X
June 26, 2006	Department of Labor and Industries Small Business Roundtable	X	X	
July 26, 2006	Skamania County Economic Development Council	X	X	X
July 27, 2006	Mount Adams Chamber of Commerce	X	X	
July 28, 2006	Presentation to the Department of Health's Quality Assurance Team			X
September 8, 2006	Department of Ecology's Environmental Program Managers			X

Business Portal
Integrate Government Services for Businesses
2006 Year End Report

Date	Outreach Activity	Audiences		
		Businesses	Organizations that Support Businesses	State, County & City
September 9, 2006	Small Business Fair	X	X	
September 14, 2006	Washington Financial Officers annual meeting			X
September 14, 2006	Department of Ecology's Regulatory Performance Advisors			X
September 20, 2006	Quarterly Webmasters Meeting			X
October 19, 2006	Southwest Chapter Certified Public Accountants	X	X	X
October 25, 2006	Association of Cities & Counties Information Systems Fall Conference			X
October 23 - 25, 2006	Usability testing	X		
November 7, 2006	Economic Development Council of Thurston County Annual Conference	X	X	X

Business Portal
Integrate Government Services for Businesses
2006 Year End Report

4. Usage and Satisfaction Statistics

The following table provides a monthly breakdown of the number of visitors to the Business Portal (business.wa.gov) – also known as Doing Business.

Month	Release	Visits to the Site	Task Satisfaction*	Role Satisfaction**
January 2006		44,846	No data	55
February 2006	Release 1 on February 28, 2006	39,723	No data	No data
March 2006		52,863	No data	No data
April 2006		49,635	No data	No data
May 2006	Release 2.1 on May 25, 2006	48,406	67	57
June 2006		47,766	65	59
July 2006		51,792	65	62
August 2006		50,414	71	61
September 2006		46,212	64	56
October 2006	October Release (R2.2) on October 12, 2006	55,597	70	67
November 2006	November Release (R2.2 & R2.3) on November 30, 2006	52,481	66	60
December 2006		47,735	69	64

Satisfaction ratings have been gathered from a random sampling of all visitors to the Access Washington site. Five to eight percent of the random sampling of visitors has voluntarily responded to the survey. Satisfaction has steadily increased since the beginning of the Business Portal project. Satisfaction ratings related to the Doing Business in Washington have been monitored from two points of view.

*Task Satisfaction ratings are from business owners visiting Access Washington who came to learn about doing business in Washington or obtain a business license. This rating increased from 67 to 69 points.

** Role Satisfaction ratings are from those who identified themselves as a business owner. This rating increased from 55 to 64 points.

The Access Washington site is benchmarked to other portal type sites such as American Cancer Society. The satisfaction scores for the benchmarked sites range from 67 to 80 points. Access Washington's goal for overall satisfaction is 69 for Fiscal Year 2007.

Business Portal

Integrate Government Services for Businesses

2006 Year End Report

5. Agency Participation

The development of the portal was carried out by staff from each of the participating agencies. In the planning for each release, agencies worked together to define content and identify staff to be ‘matrixed’ into the project as a part-time support. The following table lists the agencies and their level of participation (number of hours) in each of the releases.

Actual for Jan-06 through Dec-06

Agency	Release 1	Release 2.1	2007-09 DP	Fall Release (2.2 & 2.3)	Total
	Jan - Feb	Mar - May	Jun-Aug	Sep - Dec	
Community, Trade & Economic Development	75	241	138	119	573
Department of Ecology	56	98	182	101	437
Department of Fish & Wildlife	32	45	21	24	122
Department of Health	32	55	137	80	304
Department of Information Services	350	1,129	259	862	2,600
Department of Labor & Industries	80	284	443	192	999
Department of Licensing	55	210	506	201	972
Department of Revenue	208	302	90	197	797
Employment Security Department	60	91	167	28	346
Secretary of State	32	53	16	19	120
Department of Social and Health Services	0	0	79	38	117
Department of Financial Institutions	0	0	20	17	37
Department of Natural Resources	0	0	34	15	49
Department of Transportation	0	0	0	0	0
Liquor Control Board	0	0	0	8	8
Office of Minority and Women Owned Enterprise	0	0	20	24	44
Utilities and Transportation Commission	0	0	0	0	0
Washington State Gambling Commission	0	0	0	0	0
Washington State Patrol	0	0	6	19	25
Department of Agriculture	0	0	12	35	47
Anthro-Tech	0	181	0	140	321
Coordination Committee (Project Manager, Business Solution Manager, Solution Architect, Support)	320	1,146	1,107	1,508	4,081
Total	1,300	3,835	3,237	3,623	11,995

Note: The hours included in this report do not include time for agency participation on the BTSG or Steering Committee.

Business Portal
Integrate Government Services for Businesses
2006 Year End Report

6. Related Projects

The following projects are developing web-based solutions (websites, online services, information-sharing processes, etc) that the Business Portal may leverage in the future:

- Clark County's City/County Integrated Permitting and Mitigation
- Department of Ecology's Geo Locator
- Department of Natural Resources' On-line Forest Practices (FPARS)
- Community Trade and Economic Development Department, Department of Ecology, Office of Financial Management's Grants, Loans and Contracts Project
- Department of Information Systems' Enterprise System Integration
- General Administration's Doing Business with Washington web site
- Office of Financial Management's Financial/Administrative Systems Roadmap Initiative